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State Poet Laureate bill introduced

Lansing – Michigan will join 39 states that have an official state poet laureate under legislation introduced Tuesday by Sen. Bruce Patterson, R-Canton.

“Michigan is home to many poetry writers and poetry lovers so it is only fitting that we should name one of them as our poet laureate,” Patterson said. “I hope that this post will encourage the arts, literature and education in Michigan.”

Senate Bill 181 creates the Office of State Poet Laureate under the Department of State and says the governor may appoint a state poet to a term not exceeding the governor’s term.

The state poet, required to be a Michigan resident, will not receive a salary.

Patterson introduced this bill after being contacted by the Poetry Society of Michigan.

“Poetry, as an art form, is culturally alive and well in Michigan and transcends ethnic, racial, economic and age barriers,” said Mono D’Angelo, PSM president, and resident in Patterson’s district. “The need for a poet laureate to mentor and guide these talented artists is real. A state appointed poet laureate is an effective, yet economical, investment in the cultural future of the entire state. Michigan is one of only eleven states without an appointed Poet Laureate and the thousands of poetry fans in our great state feel it is time to get with the program.”

The bill is assigned to the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee for its first hearing. In classical Greece, poetry was considered a form of skilled workmanship, a kind of artifact; English still speaks of poets as “word-smiths.”

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